DECEMBER, 1967 VOL. IV, NO. 12

PERSUASION®

VIEWS

VIETNAM: PART II

COMMUNISTS AND
COMMUNIST FRONTS.....by Joan Kennedy Taylor

REVIEWS

WISH FULFILLMENT AS FOREIGN POLICY

a review of Ronald Steel's
Pax Americana.....by David J. Dawson

JOAN KENNEDY TAYLOR, editor 50¢

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Published monthly by Persuasion, Inc., 260 West 86th Street, New York, N. Y. 10024. Subscription rate: $5.00 per year ($6.00 outside U. S., Canada and Mexico). Canadian residents add 8% foreign exchange.

Please include ZIP code number with your address.

Publisher.....*David J. Dawson*
Editor.....*Joan Kennedy Taylor*
Staff.....*Elenore Boddy*
Avis Brick
Joyce Jones
Lois Roberts

Persuasion is a trade mark registered with the United States Patent Office.

Copyright © 1967 by Persuasion, Inc.

All rights reserved—no reproduction in whole or in part without permission.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

DECEMBER, 1967 VOL. IV, NO. 12

VIEWS

Vietnam: Part II-Communists and Communist Fronts

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Anyone attempting to have an opinion on the current war in Vietnam and on what the proper conduct of the United States should be with respect to Vietnam, must firstybe able to answer some questions. The most basic question of all, of course, is--Is communism an admirable political philosophy? Those who answer "yes" will have no doubt that the United States should not interfere with the spread of communism, and should therefore not be militarily present in South Vietnam. But those who find nothing admirable in communism must find answers to still more questions. Suppose, even though we do not like communism, the Vietnamese do? Don't they have a right to choose the form of government that the majority of their people want? And if the majority of the Vietnamese are *not* friendly to communism, why have the Viet Cong made such gains, and why has the war dragged on for so long? Doesn't this show that the majority of the people are sympathetically helpful to the Viet Cong?

One can begin to find the answers to these questions by doing one thing--by being specific about the nature of Communist tyranny. Communism is the total denial of the rights of man and, even though it may have its privileged bureaucracy which is willing to support the regime, once it is well established, no majority in any country ever wanted the *fact* of communism. We are not talking about propaganda slogans, so vague as to be meaningless, we are talking about the economic devastation that accompanies the attempt to make an unworkable theory work by force, and the control of the population being forced--by terror. Nor are Communist soldiers necessarily willing supporters of the regimes they fight for. Eugene Lyons in *Worker's Paradise Lost* tells us that in the first four months of the German

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

invasion of the Soviet Union in World War II, the Germans took four million prisoners and deserters, and that later in the war, one million former Communist soldiers were willing to don German uniforms in the hope that they would be sent to invade the Soviet Union. At the end of the Korean War, according to Marguerite Higgins, "more than 14,500 of a total of 19,500 Chinese prisoners of war flatly refused to be repatriated from prisoner-of-war camps in Korea and chose instead to go to Nationalist China." (Higgins, p. 147)

Communist tyranny is not merely the imposition of a corrupt, self-serving regime at the top, a regime which can be evaded in many areas by the populace; Communist organization reaches down into the smallest village. As a matter of fact, it is precisely in the village that the most stubborn antagonist of communism is located--the peasant. For the most spectacular failure of communism is its agricultural failure.

Eugene Lyons has given us some useful facts and figures. In every country that has collectivized its agriculture, food production has dropped, often drastically. Soviet Russia after 38 years of collectivization and mechanization can't feed its own people, although pre-revolutionary Russia could. Communist China's total food production has decreased, although the population has increased in spite of the fact that an estimated 25 million Chinese died in the 1961-1962 famine. The potato crop in East Germany fell by 43 per cent after collectivization; the Cuban rice harvest diminished over a five-year period from 6,750,000 quintals to less than a million.

Whenever peasants are permitted to keep some private plots, the contrast between them and the collective

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

farms is startling. Russian peasants have such plots, which by 1966 amounted to 3 per cent of Russia's sown acreage and, according to the government's own figures, supplied 60 per cent of the country's potato crop, 40 per cent of all vegetable and milk, and 68 per cent of all meat products. "This 3 per cent of private enterprise supplies most of the non-cereal needs of a hundred million people in the countryside and in large measure supplies the urban population, especially in small and middle-sized towns." (Lyons, p. 201)

Vietnam is no exception. Marguerite Higgins says that "in the early years of Communist rule, per capita food production dropped ten percent in North Vietnam." (Higgins, p. 13) And to quote Eugene Lyons again: "A striking contrast in agricultures was provided, in the late 1950's and early 1960's, by North and South Vietnam. The North had been on pitiful rations from the inception of its communist existence, and in 1961-1962 suffered near-famine. Every available piece of ground around public buildings, schools, factories had been sown to sweet potatoes, gourds, and other quick growing vegetables. But South Vietnam, though already harassed by Viet Cong guerrillas in those years, had adequate crops. The land distribution undertaken by President Diem was beginning to show good results--it was in part to disrupt that process that Hanoi moved to escalate its guerrilla offensive." (Lyons, p. 195)

For the collectivization program (which is called "cooperativization" in North Vietnam, according to Takashi Oka in a *Christian Science Monitor* report published April 2, 1963) has been encountering the same kind of failure in North Vietnam as it has everywhere else. Even the French journalist Jean Lacouture, who is willing to gloss over the culmination of "land reform" in North Vietnam as "certain abuses of socialist planning" (Lacouture,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

p. 37), says that Truong Chinh, the former secretary-general of the Lao Dong (the North Vietnamese Communist Party), "tried in 1955 to put through the agrarian reform at such a pace that eighteen months later North Vietnam was on the brink of a general uprising. Mutinies had already broken out in the region of Vinh. Truong Chinh was relieved of his function as secretary-general of the Party." (Lacouture, p. 48) Marguerite Higgins has published more specific information about what the Party was willing to admit in its ensuing "self-criticism." She says: "The tragic situation of the peasantry in Communist Vietnam was candidly admitted in the newspaper *Nhan Van*, which is Hanoi's counterpart of Moscow's *Pravda*. Describing the ruthless application of the Chinese Communist style of land-reform program, *Nhan Van* wrote: 'People were arrested, jailed, and their property confiscated. Innocent children of parents wrongly classified as "landlords" were starved to death.' According to the Hanoi newspaper a 'mistakes-correction' campaign brought about the release of twelve thousand *falsely accused peasants*. Further, claimed *Nhan Van*, fifteen thousand who had been killed were given *decent graves and public funerals*. There was no mention of the tens of thousands of victims considered unworthy of posthumous rehabilitation." (Higgins, p. 145, italics hers)

Miss Higgins tells us elsewhere in the same book that during this open resistance of the peasants to collective farms, "at least fifty thousand were executed and twice that number sent to forced-labor camps." (Higgins, p. 14) Why wasn't this uprising reported in the West, if it was known about? Because it took place on November 2, 1956, when the headlines of Western newspapers were full of another uprising. "For at the same moment," say Marguerite Higgins, "Soviet tanks were crushing the Hungarian

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

rebellion and Western attention was riveted on that European tragedy." (Higgins, p. 13)

But, a naive person might wonder, if the man who instituted the cruel land reform program in North Vietnam was ousted and the mistakes admitted, perhaps the peasants' situation was better in later years? First of all, Truong Chinh was not permanently ousted. Jean Lacouture tells us that "after 1960, Truong Chinh, president of the Permanent Committee of the National Assembly, again emerged as the most important personage of the country next to Ho Chi Minh...." (Lacouture, p. 48) Secondly, years later in 1963 the same problems of collectivization remained, as reported by Takashi Oka in the *Christian Science Monitor* of April 2, 1963. "As with many other Communist countries, agriculture appears to be the crux of the Hanoi regime's problems. Infiltrating guerrillas into neighboring lands seems to be less difficult than winning the active cooperation of collectivized peasants under Hanoi's own control....Even today, though collectivization has been 'basically completed,' the peasants spend the bulk of their time and derive the major portion of their income from the small private plots they have been permitted to retain." By the following September 27, a little more than a month before President Diem of South Vietnam was to be overthrown, Joseph Alsop was reporting in the *New York Herald Tribune* that "... although less is known about North Viet Nam than almost any other country in the Communist bloc, it is now quite certain that the condition of North Viet Nam is downright desperate. Prof. P. J. Honey, the Englishman who is literally the only serious authority on Viet Nam with no French or other ax to grind, compares the present situation in the North 'to the worst moment in China after the disaster of the Great Leap Forward.'... Prof. Honey,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

whose information has been authoritatively confirmed here in Hong Kong, describes the North Vietnamese masses as living on or below the brink of starvation outside the two show towns of Hanoi and Haiphong. Cloth is so short that the peasant women work the fields in breech clouts--a real horror to the Vietnamese. And deaths from simple hunger are reported from the villages."

When we consider that South Vietnam is a country in which an estimated 85 per cent of the population live in villages and work on the land, we can see that it is unlikely that its citizens would be predisposed to Communist agriculture. And they are not. "The peasant in Vietnam was vaguely conscious that one of the communists' aims was to capture the rich rice-lands of the Mekong Delta;" says Sir Robert Thompson, who headed the British Advisory Mission in Vietnam from 1961 to 1965, "but he understood more clearly the failures of communism in the agricultural sphere both in China and in North Vietnam, and the communist methods of administering agricultural production through communes and collectivization rather than through peasant farmers. This ran counter to every peasant's ambition to own sufficient land, and to build a house in which his ancestors could be worshipped and his descendants could multiply." (Thompson, p. 65) Denis Warner, an Australian journalist who spent many years in Vietnam, concurs. "Stories of the land reform campaign in 1956 and of continuing peasant unrest in North Vietnam continue to seep through to the South. The Communist image is no longer that of pristine purity....try as they may, with the paint and powder of neutrality, the Viet Cong fail to conceal their true identity." (Warner, p. 218)

The Communists have never abandoned the collectivization of agriculture as an ideal--nor can they,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

without abandoning theory. How could they support private ownership of the land for farmers, and a free agriculture, while maintaining "socialist planning" in industry?

This means that no peasant, anywhere, will ever fully and knowingly support a Communist program. For there is a reason why communism has been so bitterly fought in agricultural areas. Communism calls for nationalization of the means of production. In industry, this means factories and machinery. But the means of production of food in most of the countries of the world is the *peasant*. It is *he* who becomes the literal property of the state; it is he who is collectivized. And he resists it.

But if the South Vietnamese peasant knows that he has no reason to envy his Northern counterpart, and knows that the Viet Cong supports a policy which, if implemented, would lead to agricultural collectivization, then how has the Viet Cong managed to succeed? Is it not possible, it is asked, that the Viet Cong and its political arm, the National Liberation Front, represent genuine, non-Communist unrest?

There are certainly some writers who suggest this as a possibility. Jean Lacouture's book *Vietnam: Between Two Truces* climaxes by recommending that the solution to South Vietnamese problems must start with a reconciliation between the Saigon government and the Viet Cong, and in his introduction to Lacouture's book, columnist Joseph Kraft considers that the Viet Cong were "brought into being by the absolutism of the [Diem] regime." (Lacouture, p. xii) The Viet Cong, according to Kraft, are only partially Communist. "Tribal leaders, local notables, independent peasants and smallholders, not to mention intellectuals and pro-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

fessional men in Saigon, found themselves threatened by the militancy of the regime. Many were thrown into prison....Thus, local pressure for the communists to start things began to build up." (Lacouture, p. xiii) Mr. Kraft says the Communists were under orders not to act against Diem: "Feeling itself far more vulnerable than the Saigon regime, Hanoi had no desire to give the Diem government an excuse for intervention." (Lacouture, p. xii) The result was that the disciplined Communists took no action in the beginning. "Others resisted, and inevitably they looked to the communists for support." (Lacouture, p. xiii) Notice that Mr. Kraft not only assumes that all those who want a better life "inevitably" look to Communists for support, but also that these particular "tribal leaders, local notables, independent peasants and smallholders,...intellectuals and professional men" besides being, in general, Communist admirers, knew exactly who these quiet, inactive, disciplined Communists were.

It is difficult for Americans to picture Communists waiting to be pressured into joining local dissension. For there is one kind of organization which Americans had some experience with in the 1930's, an organization whose membership is partly Communist and partly non-Communist. It is called a Communist front. The approach is for the Communists either to set up a new organization or to attempt to gain control of an existing one (such as a union) and to have Communists as key officials and also have a fairly large showing of non-Communist officials who are less active and less crucial. From the Communist point of view, such an organization can be extremely useful, as it gives the Party many workers whom it could not otherwise recruit, and it also diverts public attention from known Communist aims (which a majority of the people would not

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

support) to the specific published aims of the specific front organization, which may be both admirable and popular.

The Viet Minh organization which Ho Chi Minh established in 1941 and the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam (the political organization commonly called the NLF which was formally established in 1960 to direct Viet Cong military activities) were both orginally Communist fronts.

But what happened to the Viet Minh? According to Robert Shaplen, the Lao Dong Party was created in mid-February 1951 to succeed "the old Indochina Communist Party that had been disbanded in the fall of 1944 and replaced by Marxist Study Groups. ...There was no longer any pretext that the Vietminh was a broad nationalist organization in which non-Communists could play a role. All non-Communists were now dropped from Cabinet, sub-Cabinet and other administrative posts, and Communist cadres moved swiftly...to take over the direction of peasant, worker, youth, and other groups. Old-line intellectuals and nationalist leaders who had joined the Vietminh in 1946 were now cast out. So far as is known, there was no mass purge, but some were killed and imprisoned, and others simply dropped from sight." (Shaplen, pp. 71-72) Bernard B. Fall tells us that the original North Vietnamese constitution, with its quotations from the American Declaration of Independence, was replaced in 1960 by a "strikingly doctrinaire document." (Raskin and Fall, p. 260)

A similar pattern was followed in the National Liberation Front. Bernard B. Fall (a French writer who taught at Howard University in Washington, D.C.) dicussed some of its chronology in an article published in London on April 22, 1965.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

According to Professor Fall, there was a secret meeting in March 1960, of a group calling itself the Nam Bo Resistance Veterans Organization, which issued a proclamation claiming that it was fighting the Diem regime in self-defense. The following September 5, the third congress of the Communist Lao Dong was held in Hanoi, at which it was advocated that a "broad national united front" be formed in South Vietnam to support the "southern people's revolutionary struggle." Three months later, on December 20, 1960, the actual National Liberation Front was formed by a Provisional Central Committee of southern resistance leaders. It held its first congress of 100 delegates in February 1962. "According to published accounts," Professor Fall continues, "the NLF congress not only grouped former Communist resistance members, but also other elements from the Vietnamese Democratic Party and the Radical Socialist Party, both of which, like all non-Communist Vietnamese political organizations, represented almost nothing. There also had appeared on the scene a small but openly Communist Party, the People's Revolutionary Party (PRP), created in December, 1961;...The NLF congress proceeded to establish a central committee of 53 members, 31 of whom were elected then, while another 22 seats were kept open for representatives of 'mass organizations, political parties and groups of personalities which will join the Front in the future.'" (reprinted in Raskin and Fall, pp. 258-59)

This chronology enables people who consider that the NLF is independent of Hanoi, like Joseph Kraft and Jean Lacouture, to stress the fact that, since there was a meeting in March, the Lao Dong call for an organization in the South came *after* some organizational activity had already taken place there. (What they do not stress is that on November 10, 1960, even before the official founding of the NLF,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

South Vietnam sent a letter to the International Control Commission which was supposedly supervising the neutrality of Laos, charging that in October, regular army forces from North Vietnam had infiltrated through Laos to join in attacks in the Kontum Pleiku region.) The same facts reported by Mr. Fall about the founding of the NLF enable writers such as Marguerite Higgins, who considers that the "so-called National Liberation Front of South Vietnam....is, of course, the creature and creation of the North Vietnam Communist Party," (Higgins, p. 14) to stress the fact that the Front was officially founded only after a South Vietnamese liberation front was called for by the Lao Dong congress.

The NLF issued a manifesto, which is summarized in Sir Robert Thompson's book *Defeating Communist Insurgency*. He mentions nine points which promise the release of political prisoners, freedom to all mass organizations and parties, freedom of the press, the replacement of the National Assembly with a new Assembly which, once the constitution was abrogated, would "decide on the nature and form of the regime," the elimination of "the American trade monopoly," the acceptance of technical aid and cultural information from all countries, and a policy of neutrality and peaceful reunification. Anyone could join in these aims. "All they needed in common," says Sir Robert, "was to be 'against the United States imperialists and their henchmen.'" (Thompson, pp. 22-23)

In December 1967, the NLF distributed at the United Nations appolitical program which called for the abolition of "the disguised colonial regime established by the United States imperialists in South Vietnam," and promised "To Set Up a Broad and Progressive Democratic Regime." This program was much more detailed than the original manifesto, and promised, among other things, land to the landless,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

freedom of religion, social relief, the restoration of "Normal Relations Between North and South Vietnam," and "a Foreign Policy of Peace and Neutrality" (as quoted in *The New York Times*, Friday, December 15, 1967). What is especially interesting is that the same observation can be made of this program that Sir Robert Thompson made about the Front's original manifesto: "It should be particularly noted that the word 'communism' does not appear at all; even the communists realize that it is a dirty word. Nor do they take a chance on 'socialism.'" (Thompson, p. 23)

For between 1962 and 1967, the Communist control of the National Liberation Front began to show more clearly. Denis Warner in *The Last Confucian* tells us about "a top-secret instruction from the Lao Dong Party to its cadres in South Vietnam to establish there the People's Revolutionary Party. The instructions, which were captured in South Vietnam early in 1962, said that the new organization should appear to be a new party and look independent, though in fact it was to be nothing else than a unified North-South Vietname Lao Dong Party under the orders of the Party's politburo. ...The People's Revolutionary Party was in the 'vanguard' and its principal representative, Nguyen Van Hieu, became secretary-general of the Front. A Saigon journalist in his early forties, and a former professor of history, Hieu is regarded by his contemporaries as a talented newspaperman, an amusing companion and a dedicated Communist, who for several years, and with great skill, managed to keep out of the hands of Diem's security police." (Warner, p. 167)

R. H. Shackford, the Scripps-Howard columnist, wrote in his column of December 4, 1963, about two documents, the second of which might be the one

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Warner referred to: "Here is an excerpt from a pamphlet for guidance of Communist cells: 'It should never be admitted outside party circles that the workers' party is the Communist Party in its overt form....if we were to persist in keeping the name Communist Party, property owners, landlords, progressive intellectuals and members of religious sects would be unwilling to follow us.' ...Another document in the hands of the International Control Commission admits: 'The creation of the People's Revolutionary Party [PRP] is nothing more than a tactical move. It should be explained inside the party that the object of forming the PRP is to isolate America and the Diem regime and to rebut their accusations about the invasion of the South by the North. It is a move which will permit us to sabotage the Geneva agreements, to advance the plan for invading the South and will, at the same time, permit the front for the liberation of South Viet Nam to recruit new members and to win the sympathy of the non-aligned states of Southeast Asia."

One final note. In a radio broadcast in August 1965, according to Marguerite Higgins, the PRP announced "that it was the 'correct leadership' of the so-called liberation movement. At the same time, the Communist People's Revolutionary Party of South Vietnam announced that it would apply 'fully and creatively' the theories of Marxism-Leninism in the south." (Higgins, p. 136)

All of this makes up the context in which one must assess the importance of Joseph Kraft's statement that "The National Liberation Front retains a Central Committee that seems to be less than a third communist, and that is, as it always was, especially oriented toward the problems of South Vietnam." (Lacouture, p. xiv) If one identifies the NLF as a Communist front organization, such a fact would

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

not be surprising. And in the light of such an identification, it is not crucial to determine whether the NLF was "really" formed in March or December of 1960; whether before the first documented capture of North Vietnamese troops in South Vietnam, or after. What seems clear is, whichever way you slice it, it's still Communist.

But this brings us back to an earlier problem--how can we then explain the Viet Cong victories?

The answer is that most people greatly overestimate the number of people that it takes to successfully terrorize a community or a section of countryside. They understand it quite well with regard to criminals. The police in New York City are unable to prevent violent crime there. There are sections in which it is considered exceedingly dangerous for a citizen to go out on the street, late at night. Yet we would hardly say that this proves that a majority of New Yorkers are on the side of the criminals. Political terrorists operate like criminals. Sir Robert Thompson details in his book *Defeating Communist Insurgency* that every insurgency requires a *cause* (in the case of Vietnam it was anti-colonialism in the war against the French, changing to anti-imperialism when the Diem regime was established and welcomed American aid), a *breakdown of rural administration* (this had already happened in South Vietnam during the Indochinese War), and *selective terrorism* "designed to keep the local population completely cowed. It is a policy that is continued right through an insurgency in order to maintain ruthless control and to frighten any would-be supporters of the government." (Thompson, p. 25) This also happened in South Vietnam--first, with murders and abductions of selected village leaders, and in 1960 and 1961, according to Sir Robert Thompson, there were a total of 6,130 murders and 6,213 abductions, *excluding all battle casualties.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

For murder on that scale, one needs quite a few followers, but Denis Warner tells us that "Che Guevara, Mao's Cuban disciple...believes that a nucleus of thirty to fifty men is sufficient to initiate a successful Maoist armed revolt in any country in the Americas." (Warner, p. 38)

Open guerrilla warfare is the next step in a Communist insurgency, followed later, if it suits Communist purposes, by conventional warfare. The guerrillas are able to recruit soldiers from the countryside in which they are fighting--largely by terror or by kidnaping. Marguerite Higgins has many eyewitness accounts of such kidnapings in *Our Vietnam Nightmare*, as well as of terrorist murders and public tortures.

One must certainly add to this sketch of how insurgency is initiated that the measures taken to counteract the insurgency in South Vietnam were not uniformly well advised or successful. As Sir Robert Thompson says, "Unfortunately, during the build-up phase, the signs are not always recognized, and the existence of a subversive movement may even be ignored or denied for short-sighted political reasons. It is not easy for a government to alert its people to the danger. If restrictive measures are successfully taken, there will be little evidence of subversion, and the government runs the risk of being accused of repression. If, on the other hand, subversion leads to insurgency, there will then be plenty of evidence, but the government has a war on its hands." (Thompson, p. 50)

There were several conflicting views on the best way to counteract Communist insurgency, and American and Vietnamese officials often acted at cross-purposes. In an interview given to *U.S. News & World Report*, published on February 18, 1963, President Diem said, "...subversive war has its own particu-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

lar laws, and to ignore them is to renounce winning the war. It took us a long time to study these laws, to find out our own errors, the errors of the Western experts in guerrilla warfare, and the errors of the Communist experts, themselves, in guerrilla warfare. It is by taking advantage of the errors of these Communist experts and by correcting the errors of our own specialists that we are winning the war in Vietnam....Our basic strategy...aims at depriving the Communists of the logistical support they have been receiving from their bases and from the villages. ...In this military strategy, the role of the strategic hamlets is decisive, as they are designed to cut off the Communists from the population, physically and morally, and to reduce them to a foreign expeditionary corps facing a hostile population."

Essentially, a strategic hamlet is a fortified village, surrounded by barbed wire and perhaps a moat, into which the villagers can retire at night and which they can defend from Viet Cong attack through their own militia unit and, ideally, through radio communication with units of the army. Since the Viet Cong habitually use the nighttime to seize men and supplies, a successful strategic hamlet would cut off Viet Cong units from supplies and recruits. The strategic hamlet program was started in 1962 under the direction of President Diem's brother, Ngo Dinh Nhu, with some experienced advice from Sir Robert Thompson--but not all the strategic hamlets were truly defensible. Sir Robert himself considered that, especially in the Mekong Delta, the program was overextended by mid-1963, and some outposts were being listed by Nhu as "strategic hamlets" which had virtually no defenses against attack.

According to Marguerite Higgins, President Diem wanted a village-based counter-insurgency program long before his American "advisors" recognized its necessity. "He had argued in vain as early as 1958

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

that the villages ought to be prepared to fight guerrilla attacks, and had even made a trip to Washington to argue for the kind of weapons that could be used in counter-insurgency warfare.... Diem's pleas were initially turned down." (Higgins, p. 15)

Joseph Alsop gives a similar example of conflicting views, in a column published by the *New York Herald Tribune* on November 4, 1963, after President Diem's downfall. "When the war began in bloody earnest," wrote Mr. Alsop, "President Diem decided to arm the civil guard, whose members have suffered more casualties by now than any other force fighting the Communists. Yet for months on end this decision of Diem's met with angry, obstinate American resistance, on the singular ground that an armed police force did not conform with the best and highest principles of Asian democracy."

Without going further into the disagreements and policy mistakes on both sides that marked United States-Vietnamese relations during this early period, I think I have indicated the kind of situation which could and did allow the rise of a Communist-led insurgency without its being necessary to postulate that the majority of the population was pro-Communist. (And without its being plausible to postulate that the insurgency was *not* Communist-led.)

Our foreign policy is not consistent in its attitude toward communism. It is perhaps because of an awareness of this fact that our government spokesmen are increasingly supporting our involvement in Vietnam, not by saying that we are helping to fight Communist insurgency, but by saying that we wish to support "independent" governments.

On April 7, 1965, President Johnson said in a speech at Johns Hopkins, "Our objective is the independence

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of South Vietnam and its freedom from attack. We want nothing for ourselves--only that the people of South Vietnam be allowed to guide their own country in their own way." In a Foreign Policy Conference for Business Executives in Washington on December 4, 1967, he said, "The war in Asia is not merely saving South Vietnam from aggression. It is also giving Asia a chance to organize a regional life of progress, co-operation and stability."

This argument of independence saves us from the embarrassing admission that while we are fighting Communists in South Vietnam, we have been carrying on cordial relations with Yugoslavia and Poland and signing a consular treaty with the Soviet Union. But it leaves us wide open to observations such as the following, by Jean Lacouture: "It is hard to say how independent a country is when 70 per cent of its budgetary deficit is covered by a foreign state which also covers all its military and police expenses. But what must always be taken into account is the great strain inflicted on such an economy by the smallest reduction of foreign assistance." (Lacouture, p. 25)

You don't support a baby rabbit as against a wolf because it's more independent--you support it because you want to protect it from being the wolf's dinner. That is what we are doing in South Vietnam; and perhaps some officials feel particularly obligated because it was we who killed the rabbit's father. For as will be detailed in a future article, it was actions taken by the American government which caused the overthrow and consequent murder of President Ngo Dinh Diem--an overthrow which led to a turn in the war in favor of the Communists, and to the eventual massive participation of American troops.

--Joan Kennedy Taylor

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Bibliography

Higgins, Marguerite, *Our Vietnam Nightmare*, Harper & Row, New York, 1965.

Lacouture, Jean, *Vietnam: Between Two Truces*, Random House, New York, 1966.

Lyons, Eugene, *Worker's Paradise Lost*, Funk & Wagnalls, New York, 1967.

Raskin, Marcus G. and Fall, Bernard B., *The Viet-Nam Reader*, Random House, New York, 1965.

Shaplen, Robert, *The Lost Revolution*, Harper & Row, New York, 1965.

Thompson, Sir Rober, *Defeating Communist Insurgency*, Frederick A. Praeger, New York, 1966.

Warner, Denis, *The Last Confucian*, Penguin Books, Baltimore, 1964.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

REVIEWS

Wish Fulfillment as Foreign Policy

Pax Americana by Ronald Steel
The Viking Press, New York, 1967

The sun never sets on the military power of the United States. Today more than a million and a half servicemen are overseas; one out of every six is in the Vietnamese war zone. There are U.S. troops in 30 countries. The United States has committed itself to possible future wars through four regional alliances and through mutual defense treaties with 42 nations. It provides military aid to nearly 100 countries. It is a member of 53 international organizations.

Had someone predicted this state of affairs in 1946 "he would have been considered mad," states Ronald Steel, author of *Pax Americana*, a recently published critique of United States foreign policy. What is his view of that policy? "These entanglements happened more by accident than by design," (p. 10) he states, but nevertheless they add up to assuming "a moral hegemony over the entire world." (p. 333) "Struggling against communism we created a counter-empire of anti-communism,"(p.16) though the empire differs from those of the past, being the result of "a kind of welfare imperialism, empire-building for noble ends rather than for such base motives as profit and influence." (pp. 16-17) The United States is actually carrying out a policy that first showed forth clearly in the Spanish-American War at the end of the nineteenth century. That "war marked the translation of the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

rising sense of American power into the vocabulary of an American mission. If this was imperialism, it came swathed in the colors of a new morality. It was the age of Manifest Destiny, an era when the United States felt herself under the historical compulsion to spread the blessings of liberty to less fortunate peoples everywhere." (p. 197) And he sees our presence in Vietnam today as based on the same compulsion.

What is this moral goal which he maintains that we are presently pursuing? We have gone beyond the legitimate ends of foreign policy--the nation's direct physical security--to seek what? "American power...has been turned into an instrument for the pursuit of an American ideology. And that ideology is not merely the defense of the nation and its institutions, but something far more ambitious: the establishment of a world order on the American plan...a universal political system." (pp. 315-16)

This is what animates our quest for allies, according to Mr. Steel, our distribution of foreign aid largesse, our entrance into treaties, and above all our repeated military entanglements. Mr. Steel sees the United States as "the world's major interventionist power."

The Roman Empire once imposed a *Pax Romana* on the entire world, by conquering it. Is there to be a *Pax Americana*? Will the United States succeed in its globalistic aims and eventually impose upon all nations an order they must abide by, like it or not? Mr. Steel thinks not. Because it isn't the kind of world that those who shape American policies think it is, and therefore it is not a world in which their policies can work. Much of this book is devoted to attempting to demonstrate how far, in

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the author's opinion, this country's leaders have strayed from reality and have engaged in a kind of "wish-fulfillment" foreign policy. But that is the criticism, as we shall see, that can be leveled against his own policy approach.

In the beginning of the present era, that is, with the coming of peace at the end of World War II, the United States began with a legitimate policy. "The goal we sought in Western Europe in the early postwar period had three qualities essential for military intervention: it was vital to our interests, it was within our means to achieve, and it had the support of those we were trying to protect." (p. 11) The presence of American troops and the massive aid to Western Europe under the Marshall Plan, he holds, saved Europe from domination by (possibly even from occupation by) the U.S.S.R.

But a gross error was made when this policy of American aid and military assistance was extended throughout the whole world, to anyone threatened by communism, to anyone who even claimed such a threat. Calling us "the last of the idealogues," (p. 27) Steel holds that it is "anti-communism as an ideology" (p. 307) which is the key to U.S. postwar foreign policy. It is this that blinds us to reality.

What does Mr. Steel see as the reality to which we are blinded by our ideology? It is that we no longer live in the world of the late forties. No longer are there only two great powers, confronting one another in deadly animosity. Today there are many centers of power in *both* the free and the Communist worlds. The U.S.S.R., if it ever was, is not now a monolithic menace that must be countered by all the force the United States can muster

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

lest the world be consumed by communism.

In his terms, the world is not now "bipolar," it has become "polycentric," and the cause is the emergence of a new force stronger than any others, stronger even than dogmas of Marxism, in his opinion. This force is "nationalism, which has become the dominant ideology throughout most of the world." (p. 338)

"Neither as a political-economic system nor as an ideology has communism been able to overcome the power of nationalism....A sense of national identity which transcends ideology is as strong today in Eastern Europe as it ever was....Today there is no Soviet bloc. There is simply an association of states proclaiming formal allegiance to the same ideology and dependent upon Russian power for protection against external enemies." (p. 35)

Nationalism has weakened the U.S.S.R. by dividing its house against itself. Red China, he maintains, is as much or even more of a preoccupation for Moscow than for Washington.

Nationalism has led to the creation and growth of what Steel calls the Third World, the world of Afro-Asian-South American countries, in many of which there is turmoil and semipermanent revolution. It is the existence of this world which, he holds, dooms the globalistic yearnings of the United States to frustration. "The turmoil of this revolutionary age is likely to continue for decades, perhaps for generations. This revolution, which has come from the breakdown of the European colonial world, the spread of a new technology, and the pressures of uncontrolled population growth, is one that no power can hope to master. It is a revolution that

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

has barely begun, and one in which communism is as incidental as is capitalism." (p. 310)

Arguing that "the notion that all communist governments everywhere are inherently evil and detrimental to our interests is the most precious myth of our foreign policy," (p. 322) he advocates the adoption of a policy which would encourage the emergence of viable states whatever their ideology. In line with this he suggests that "a strong unified Vietnam, even under communist control, would be a better barrier to Chinese expansion than a divided Vietnam prey to civil war and foreign intervention." (p. 157) He sees the Vietnam conflict as "a civil war instigated by southerners who were allowed no other means of protest against a dictatorial government in Saigon." (p. 155) Also he sees the United States as well on the way to making a mistake with Red China. In its "preoccupation" with anti-communism, he fears that the United States is losing the opportunity to exploit the fact of nationalism as a means of countering China's anti-Western, racist expansionism.

As he puts it, "Anti-communism is our own private crusade. The resistance to Chinese imperialism, on the other hand, is an issue in which every Asian nation, communist or non-communist, has a vital interest. It is as crucial to communist North Vietnam as it is to neutralist Cambodia and to right-wing Thailand." (p. 162)

What policies does Steel recommend? Actually his purpose in writing this book was not prescriptive. "This book offers no solutions," (p. viii) he writes. But at least part of an approach does

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

come through.

With his criticism of U.S. interventionism, anti-communism, and overcommitted globalism, one would think he would advocate some form of United States withdrawal. He denies this by pointing out that he only wants a military withdrawal, which he claims has already started to occur in our relationship with the Soviet Union. He maintains that without explicit agreement the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. have reached a *detente*, as a result of the Cuban crisis. In other words, the two superpowers have at least partially agreed upon each other's spheres of influence. The U.S.S.R. has eastern Europe; the United States, the western hemisphere. Some day, China too should have *its* sphere--its group of nations around it over which it has some but not total control--which act as a zone of protection for it against the world's other superpowers.

But, Steel claims, he is not calling for a simple spheres-of-influence policy. If in the interests of national security, "Overt military intervention is neither immoral nor unjustified in the abstract." (p. 248) But "intervention, like surgery...must be applied sparingly and with consummate skill." (p. 334) It must be a last resort, never for the purpose of enforcing American ideals, only to protect the national existence. We must learn to accept the fact that there will be many revolutions, many coups, much violence, particularly in emerging nations. We cannot defend everybody's freedom.

So far, although Mr. Steel can be criticized for his comprehension of Communist claims, there seems to be something to what he says. The United States cannot defend the whole world, nor consider itself responsible for it. But he has another point to

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

make--instead of destroying ourselves by fighting every possible battle, he proposes instead that we peaceably carve ourselves up in perpetual foreign aid.

We *can* reach out beyond our sphere with a different force than the military, however, he says. Not only can we, we must; we are morally required to. He offers no argument; he takes the point for granted. "The United States has a special obligation to the poorer countries." (p. 260) That obligation is foreign aid, and he calls for a no-strings-attached type of aid. "Nationalistic and ideological struggles cannot be bought off with bribes of economic assistance." (p. 257) He calls for only one limitation. "For the rich nations the problem is not how little foreign aid they can get away with, but how much can be usefully absorbed by the developing nations." (p. 269) At one point he suggests that our aid money might best go into an international pool so that nations antagonistic to the major industrial countries would receive their share without bias.

One limitation he excludes is the receiving government's attitude on the rights of man. "We ought to be aiding nations not for the political beliefs they espouse but for their ability to pursue economic development." (p. 266) How long is a major portion of U.S. production to go to such ends? "Foreign aid will be needed for decades, and perhaps for generations to come." (p. 267)

Ronald Steel's book is complex. He discusses large areas which could not be touched upon in this short review, but the core of his approach is in his already demonstrated assumptions of the necessity of altruism and the realism of anti-anti-communism.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

On this latter point he displays two minds, neither of which talks to the other.

Repeatedly he claims that the United States has overestimated the power and unity of the Communist bloc, that it is not nearly the menace to the world which the United States has assumed. And yet, his main argument against isolationism is implicitly based on a directly opposite premise. "Were America to withdraw into a shell of isolationism, Soviet Russia would be the only great power left in the world. Although she seems to have turned her back on a policy of aggression, this has been in large part because of the counterbalance of the United States. If that balance were destroyed by a unilateral American abdication, Russian leaders would be tempted to embark upon a policy of diplomatic and military adventurism....A Pax Americana is dangerous and not even desirable. A Pax Sovietica would be a universal disaster." (p. 326)

Steel thus grants the tyranny of Soviet power. His argument really is that Soviet (and eventually Chinese) power is contained by other Communist nations because of nationalistic divisiveness that transcends the call of a unifying Marxism.

That may well be the way it looks. It may indeed look as if the U.S.S.R. and Red China stand ready to rend one another. It may even, in any specific instance, occur.

But then again, it may not.

There is a fact of history that one must never forget when contemplating the rivalries of collectivistic dictatorships. In 1939, after basing a large amount of their national and international

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

propaganda campaigns on their contempt and fear of each other, the U.S.S.R. and Nazi Germany united in a nonaggression pact and proceeded to dismember Poland. A loud squabbling among rival gang leaders must not be taken as firm evidence that they will not join together to fall upon a common victim if opportunity should bring someone sufficiently helpless within their grasp.

Much as one may criticize the inconsistencies and stop-gap measures in United States foreign policy, one cannot criticize the emphasis which has always been put on national security as the proper aim of foreign relations.

By implication Ronald Steel agrees. So what his book really comes down to is this. He *wishes* that the United States and the U.S.S.R. would get together; he *wishes* that the United States would aid the underdeveloped; he *wishes* that countries would stop taking advantage of one another.

This is shown by what he regards to be the solution to the problem posed by many small nations engaging in revolutions, "pygmy wars," and other acts of anarchic violence which leave sometimes inviting power vacuums.

"America and Russia cannot prevent 'wars of national liberation' from occurring, any more than they can be sure who will ultimately benefit from them. But because of their common interest in halting the arms race and preventing a great-power confrontation, they must agree not to take advantage of any change in the status quo through military alliances or bases. This is the minimum on which any hope for cooperation rests." (pp. 343-44)

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

But what if the Russians don't agree? He admits that the "Russians may not go along....This is a danger we must be prepared to cope with." (pp. 344-45)

The success of Steel's approach ultimately depends upon the granting of a wish--a wish that specific political choices didn't add up to ideologies, and that the Russians would be nice.

--David J. Dawson

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

PERSUASION, INC.
260 WEST 86th ST.
NEW YORK, N.Y. 10024
RETURN REQUESTED

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED